



File Code: 1950

Date: JUN 29 2011

Dear Forest User,

The North Fork Ranger District of the Clearwater National Forest is proposing forest management activities and watershed improvement activities in the Middle Bugs Project area. This project area encompasses approximately 5,800 acres in the Middle Creek drainage between Lean-to Ridge and Beaver Dam Creek. It is located approximately 11 air miles east of Pierce, Idaho in Township 36N, Range 7E, Sections 1, 2, 11-15, 17, 20-23, 26-28 and 34; Township 36N, Range 8E, Sections 4-9, Boise Meridian, Clearwater County, Idaho. The area is accessed by Forest Roads 100, 103, 104, 500 and 555.

### Management Direction

This proposal was developed to address management opportunities identified for vegetation and watershed resources within the project area. Existing conditions were compared with desired future conditions defined in the Forest Plan to identify management opportunities.

The Clearwater Forest Plan identifies the majority of the Middle Bugs project area as Management Area (MA) C8S Big Game Summer Range. MA C8S general direction and goals are to manage these areas to maintain high quality wildlife and fishery objectives while producing timber from the productive Forest land. These objectives can be met by modifying standard timber practices and scheduling and prohibiting most public motorized uses. Wildlife objectives are primarily oriented at elk habitat management. All proposed treatments are within MA C8S.

MA A6 consists of a corridor approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile in width that encompasses the historic Lolo Trail system, which includes the Nee Me Poo Trail that lies along the southern edge of the project area. The Middle Bugs Project proposes construction of approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of temporary road within this corridor. MA A6 direction is to provide opportunity for recreational activities oriented to traveling over, understanding and appreciating the route as a historic travel route; ensure that prehistoric, historic and archeological sites and values are studied, preserved, or protected in accordance with cultural resource regulations and provide for interpretation and enjoyment of these sites, along with provision for dispersed recreation and protection of visual quality.



MA M2 consists of riparian areas found in all management areas. MA M2 general direction is to manage under the principles of multiple use, as areas of special consideration, distinctive values, and integrated with adjacent management areas to the extent that water and other riparian dependent resources are protected. Only culvert replacement and road decommissioning or storage activities are proposed in M2.

The Bighorn Weitas Roadless Area borders the project area on the west, east and north. The historic Nee Mee Poo Trail borders the project on the south. There are no inventoried roadless areas, wilderness areas or wild and scenic river designations in the project area.

Portions of the project area have designations from other agencies. The 202 integrated Report of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) indicates Middle Creek, Beaver Dam Creek and Rocky Ridge Creek are 303(d) Water Quality Limited Stream (WQLS) for temperature. Beneficial uses for all three streams are secondary contact recreation, cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning.

## **Purpose and Need for the Proposal**

### ***Goods and Services***

**Purpose:** To provide goods and services important to society and recover the economic value of dead and dying trees.

**Need:** Lodgepole pine stands dominate much of the project area. Mountain pine beetle infestations are contributing to increased mortality in the area. There is a need to capture the commercial value of the timber in infested stands before it is lost due to mortality and decay. Harvest of the timber would provide materials to local industries consistent with forest plan direction.

### ***Vegetation Improvement***

**Purpose:** Improve species diversity and balance vegetative successional stages across the landscape to create conditions that are resilient and allow for rapid recovery after disturbances.

**Need:** The project area is dominated by homogenous stands of lodge pole pine of similar age. Homogenous stands are less resilient to disturbances such as insects, disease and fire. There is a need to reduce the lodge pole pine component while increasing white pine and larch which would increase biodiversity and tolerance to disturbance within individual stands as well as the project area.

**Purpose:** Reduce stand densities in overstocked stands to promote tree growth and vigor.

**Need:** Competition from excessive vegetation in mixed Douglas fir and western larch stands has reduced stand vigor and increased susceptibility to mortality from insects and disease. These overstocked areas are slowly declining in health and vigor. Reducing stand density by thinning would improve the resiliency of older mixed conifer timber stands to withstand the effects of fire and potential insects and disease outbreaks.



### ***Watershed Improvement***

**Purpose:** Reduce potential sediment inputs into the aquatic ecosystem and improve passage for aquatic species.

**Need:** Sediment input from gravel and native surface roads can flow into streams, negatively affecting fish habitat and water quality. Improvement of watershed function and stream conditions can be accomplished by reducing road densities and repairing existing roads and culverts to reduce sediment and improve drainage.

#### **Proposed Actions**

Regeneration harvest and post harvest activity including slash treatment, burning and planting would be conducted on approximately 650 acres in mostly mature lodgepole pine stands at high risk of mountain pine beetle infestation. After harvest and postharvest activity, the area would be planted with larch, white pine and Douglas fir. Commercial thinning would be conducted on approximately 63 acres to reduce dense stocking levels and improve growth and vigor.

UNIT	ACRES	PROPOSED TREATMENT
A	15	Commercial Thin
B	48	Commercial Thin
C	419	Regeneration
D	36	Regeneration
E	194	Regeneration

Harvest would be accomplished with skyline and ground based systems from Forest Roads 103 and 555. Road maintenance would occur on existing roads that access the treatment areas. About 15 miles of Forest Roads 103 and 556 would be reconditioned. Approximately 3.8 miles of temporary ridge top roads would also be constructed to access the harvest areas. They would be obliterated after use.

Approximately 2 miles of permanent road would be constructed to access the proposed harvest areas. This road would be closed to motorized access after use as required by MA C8S direction.

This project would decommission approximately 3.5 miles of Roads 336, 558, 1610, 5159, 103J, 5159A, 3101A, 103K and their spurs that are not needed for management. The project would store approximately 3.1 miles of Roads 103, 553, 553A, 5153 and 5153A and their spurs. Storage and decommissioning would reduce potential sediment input into streams.

Units C and D are 419 and 194 acres respectively. Section 6 of the National Forest Management Act requires that cuts designed to regenerate an even-aged stand of timber be subject to established maximum size limits, in this case 40 acres (16 USC 1604 (g) (3) (F) (iv)). FSM 2471.1 allows this size limit to be exceeded with Regional Forester approval and 60 day public notice. The 60 day notice required for proposed openings greater than 40 acres in size will begin with issuance of the environmental document for this project.

Tammy Harding (208 926-6436) at the Kamiah Ranger Station in Kamiah is the team leader for this project, and is the best source of technical information about it. I am the responsible line officer for the project. You can contact me directly at (208) 476-8223. Your comments should be mailed to Tammy Harding, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Kamiah Ranger Station, 903 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Kamiah, Idaho 83536. Send e-mail comments to [tharding@fs.fed.us](mailto:tharding@fs.fed.us). She will acknowledge receipt of all e-mail comments; if you do not receive confirmation, please resubmit your comments or call us by phone.

If you decide to comment, please include the following information: (1) your name, address, phone number, and organization represented, if any; (2) the title of the proposal you are commenting on; and (3) specific facts and concerns about this project that should be considered in reaching a decision.

Thank you for your interest in this project. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



HEATHER L. BERG  
Acting District Ranger



# Middle Bogs Project



- Study Area Boundary
- Permanent Construction
- Temporary Road
- Change access from open yearlong to restricted year
- Decommission
- Place Into Storage
- Commercial Thin
- Regeneration
- Neemeepoo Corridor
- Bighorn-Weitas Roadle

